UNITED
NATIONS

A

General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/AC.96/825/Part I/8
23 August 1994

Original: ENGLISH

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE
HIGH COMMISSIONER'S PROGRAMME

Forty-fifth session

# UNHCR ACTIVITIES FINANCED BY VOLUNTARY FUNDS: REPORT FOR 1993-1994 AND PROPOSED PROGRAMMES AND BUDGET FOR 1995

## PART I. AFRICA

## Section 8 - Eritrea

(submitted by the High Commissioner)

GE.94-03396

## I.8 ERITREA

### Country Overview

**Characteristics of the refugee population**

1. At 31 July 1994, Eritrea hosted 1,240 refugees, of whom some 500 were from Djibouti, 450 from Yemen, 282 from Somalia and eight from various other countries. The refugees from Somalia and other countries are assisted by UNHCR in Asmara and Assab, and the Djiboutians are assisted by the Government. No assistance has as yet been provided to the Yemenis. None of the refugees are economically self-reliant.

2. An estimated 100,000 Eritrean refugees from the Sudan have repatriated spontaneously to mainly rural areas of Eritrea since its independence in 1991. A further 430,000 are poised to return.

**Major developments (1993 and first quarter 1994)**

3. After 30 years of war, a massive majority voted in favour of independence, bringing the State of Eritrea into being on 24 May 1994. Eritrea being a new country, the Government has not yet ratified the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees or the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa.

4. Following an inter-agency mission to Eritrea, composed of United Nations agencies (including UNHCR), non-governmental organization (NGOs) and bilateral donor representatives under the auspices of the Department of Humanitarian Affairs (DHA), the Government of Eritrea agreed, in May 1993, to a repatriation/reintegration/rehabilitation project known as PROFERI (Programme for Refugee Reintegration and Rehabilitation of Resettlement Areas in Eritrea) covering all of the estimated 500,000 Eritrean returnees from the Sudan. The total PROFERI budget is estimated at some $ 262 million, with UNHCR's part budgeted at some $ 32 million covering, inter alia, transport, reception and initial integration. The more developmental activities in the fields of health, education, agriculture, shelter, water and roads are left to the other participants in the programme.

5. The initial response by the donor community to this programme (some $ 32 million) was considered by the Eritrean Government as insufficient to embark on a large-scale repatriation. Instead, it was agreed by the Government and DHA to start with a pilot project for the return and integration of some 4,500 families (15,000 to 20,000 persons) in nine reception areas in Eritrea. Preparations to receive this group were started by the Eritrean authorities in early 1994, including the construction of reception facilities. In addition, an agreement was signed, in April 1994, between the Government of Eritrea and UNHCR establishing a legal framework for the return in safety and dignity of the refugees. Discussions between UNHCR and the Government of the Sudan are taking place to establish modalities of registration of repatriants, assuring the voluntary nature of the repatriation and guaranteeing the right of each refugee to return to his

country of origin. It is hoped that the first organized movement of returnees can take place after the rainy season in September 1994, and that the entire group of 4,500 families will have arrived in Eritrea before the end of 1994.

6. The Governments of Yemen and Eritrea agreed, in early 1994, to stop the flow of Somali refugees/job-seekers passing through Assab on their way to Yemen, which had resulted in their permanent stay in Assab. UNHCR agreed to provide assistance to genuine refugees only, and not to persons in transit. However, before an assistance programme could be established, Assab experienced a reverse movement of Somalis fleeing Yemen, together with the arrival of Yemenis. UNHCR is therefore modifying its assistance programme in Assab accordingly, including through the construction of a reception centre.

**Programme objectives and priorities**

7. Care and maintenance assistance will continue to be provided to the refugee caseload during 1995, including improved provision of services such as shelter, health care, potable water supply and sanitation facilities, as well as basic education opportunities. At the same time, possibilities for voluntary repatriation and increasing self-reliance will be explored.

8. During the latter half of 1994, UNHCR is taking necessary measures to prepare basic infrastructure and services to receive the returnees from the Sudan within the context of PROFERI. A limited number of organized movements will be executed during 1994.

9. UNHCR will place emphasis on enabling the returnees to become self-reliant/sufficient in the shortest feasible time. Quick impact projects (QIPs) will focus on major areas of return by providing assistance which will benefit the local population in those areas, as well as in increasing the capacity for the reintegration of returnees.

**Arrangements for implementation/related inputs**

10. The implementing agency for the programme for refugees in Eritrea is the Ministry of Interior.

11. The Government of Eritrea has opted for a policy of national execution which calls for foreign-supported programmes to be implemented directly by governmental agencies. For PROFERI and for the coordination of the implementation of the returnee programme, the Commissioner of Eritrean Refugees Affairs (CERA) is UNHCR's counterpart, with appropriate ministries acting as executing agencies. Thus, the reception centres and the resettlement sites will be established and operated directly by CERA.

12. Within PROFERI, several United Nations agencies have made provisions for the following related inputs:

| | |
|---|---|
| UNDP: | overall coordination and support to institutions and operations |
| WHO: | health related support |
| WFP: | food assistance |
| FAO: | agriculture, livestock, afforestation |
| UNICEF: | water supply |

13. Bilateral donors and NGOs will participate in some activities directly with line ministries, and coordinated by CERA.

## General Programmes

### Care and maintenance

(a) 1994 planned implementation

14. Up to the end of May 1994, the Ministry of Interior implemented all assistance activities for asylum-seekers. In the second half of 1994, UNHCR will start funding a project for emergency assistance to refugees in Eritrea.

(b) 1995 programme proposals

15. UNHCR, in cooperation with the Ministry of Interior, will establish a programme for the delivery of relief goods and services. The provision of social and community services as well as basic education facilities is also planned. The levels of assistance in 1995 and 1996 are not yet determined but will be based on an expected return to political stability and a normal security situation in Somalia and other neighbouring countries, which in turn will facilitate implementation of a voluntary repatriation programme.

## Special Programmes

### Eritrean Repatriation Programme

(a) 1994 planned implementation

16. Subject to an agreement between the Government of Sudan and UNHCR, the PROFERI pilot project will be implemented as of September 1994. This would allow for UNHCR and CERA to receive and reintegrate 4,500 returnee families at nine selected site in four different provinces.

17. UNHCR is also assessing the possibility of starting QIPs in the areas of return before the end of 1994.

(b) 1995 programme proposals

18. According to the original plan for the repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan, presented in July 1993, the first phase of PROFERI would have allowed for the voluntary repatriation of 150,000 refugees.

Since the programme has been delayed, the current plan is that between 120,000 and 150,000 persons will return before the end of 1995. UNHCR will support the returnees, through CERA, with basic food commodities, in-country transport, and the establishment of resettlement sites, transport and distribution of non-food items, construction of temporary shelters and continued institutional support to CERA and implementing line ministries. Depending upon progress in the implementation of QIPs in 1994, the project will be expanded to cover larger areas during 1995.

19. During 1996, UNHCR will continue to support voluntary repatriation of Eritrean refugees from the Sudan. It is anticipated that, by the end of 1996, all the refugees living in camps/settlements and urban areas in the Sudan will have repatriated to Eritrea.

## Programme Delivery and Administrative Support Costs

### (a) Variations in planned activities in 1993

20. During 1993, UNHCR maintained a minimal presence in Asmara pending the commencement of the organized repatriation operation. The main expenditures incurred were for salaries of staff, travel costs, rental of premises, communications and other general operating expenses.

### (b) 1994 planned implementation

21. At the beginning of the year, the Office continued to maintain a minimal staff presence as the country agreement had not yet been entered into. Hence, only minimal activities were undertaken, although contingency plans were made for the provision of care and maintenance assistance to approximately 600 Somali refugees, as well as for the repatriation of some 430,000 Eritrean returnees from the Sudan, to be implemented once an agreement is finalized. The Office was operating during this period under the care of the Administration Officer. Subsequent to discussions with the Government of Eritrea, a Chargé de Mission was assigned to Asmara in March. The signature of the agreement with the Government in mid-April 1994 enabled UNHCR to finalize the budgetary requirements for the assistance projects and to commence the construction of a camp in the Assab area. Subsequently, a Senior Programme Officer and a Protection Officer were also appointed. The posts of two guards were discontinued effective 1 January 1994. Higher travel costs are foreseen in the revised 1994 budget to ensure appropriate monitoring of the returnee operation from the Sudan. The anticipated move of the UNHCR Office to United Nations common premises is expected to be delayed as the necessary works have not yet commenced. Meanwhile, in April 1994, the Office of the Chargé de Mission moved to temporary premises which required minor alterations and repairs. The revised 1994 estimate includes these costs, as well as UNHCR's contribution to the common premises.

### (c) 1995 programme proposals

22. At this juncture, the initial 1995 estimates are similar to the revised 1994 estimates.

23. New Field Offices will be established at the reception centres in Tessenei, Ghirmaika and Mahmimet. These will be staffed by the Programme Monitoring Assistants, who should travel by motorcycle to eliminate the necessity of stationing vehicles in these sites and employing additional drivers. The Programme Assistant for Tessenei will also cover the Office of Ghirmaika.

24. The care and maintenance programme for refugees will continue as the situation requires. The monitoring of this programme will most probably be undertaken by the Protection Officer and Assistant.

# UNHCR EXPENDITURE IN ERITREA

(in thousands of United States dollars)

| 1993 | 1994 | | 1995 | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| AMOUNT OBLIGATED | ALLOCATION APPROVED BY 1993 EXCOM | PROPOSED REVISED ALLOCATION | SOURCE OF FUNDS AND TYPE OF ASSISTANCE | PROPOSED ALLOCATION/ PROJECTION |
| **SPECIAL PROGRAMMES** | | | | |
| – | 25,000.0 | – | HORN OF AFRICA | – |
| – | – | 519.0 | PROGRAMME DELIVERY<br>See Annexes I a and II a | 520.3 |
| – | – | 137.9 | ADMINISTRATIVE SUPPORT<br>See Annexes I b and II b | 181.1 |
| **0.0** | **25,000.0** | **656.9** | **GRAND TOTAL** | **701.4** |